United Nations E/ICEF/2001/P/L.52

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
29 March 2001

Original: English

For information

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Annual session 2001
4-8 June 2001
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

Summary of mid-term reviews and major evaluations of country programmes

Latin America and the Caribbean

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustment in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The MTR and evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 2000.

Introduction

1. In the year 2000, the Latin America and the Caribbean region carried out only one mid-term review (MTR), of the multi-country programme of the Eastern Caribbean. The present report summarizes the Eastern Caribbean experience and describes, in addition, three evaluations that took place in the region: a review of experiences from countries with advanced rights-based programming (Brazil, Costa Rica and Venezuela); implementation of the Brazilian Statue of the Child and the Adolescent; and the multi-country Amazon Subregional Programme for Social Action.

* E/ICEF/2001/7.

01-31269 (E) 070501

Country mid-term review

Multi-country programme of the Eastern Caribbean

2. The multi-country programme covers Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands. The country programme objectives are to: protect children and youth against violence, exploitation, early pregnancy, disease and addiction; improve the targeting and efficiency of social investment and increase budgetary allotments to reach 20 per cent of public expenditure for basic social services; and achieve or maintain progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children.

3. The programme has four components: education for child development and participation; health and community life promotion; child rights promotion; and social investment, planning, monitoring and evaluation. For programmatic purposes, the subregion is divided into three levels: Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, with programmes including a service delivery component benefiting deprived groups; the Windward Islands (Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), with community-oriented capacity-building efforts based on successful non-governmental organization (NGO) experiences; and the remaining countries, where programmes focus on national-level social planning, child rights monitoring and institution strengthening. These levels basically correlate to national wealth and social indicator levels, thereby directing more resources to the least well off, while also pursuing common capacity-building goals across wealthier nations.

4. The MTR process included eight national meetings, two subregional meetings and a final meeting. Participants included Governments, key bilateral donors, United Nations agencies, NGOs and community organizations.

5. **The situation of children and women**. Social indicators have remained stable since the beginning of the country programme, at generally good levels. Under-five mortality rates range from 13 to 35 per 1,000 live births, maternal mortality is relatively low, and immunization rates are generally over 90 per cent. The multi-country area as a whole has met many of the goals of the World Summit for Children. However, in all the members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), poverty continues to increase as a result of disruption of the banana trade and rising youth unemployment. Nor has there been significant increase in basic social sector budgets, which is a country programme objective.

6. A clearer picture of the situation of adolescents has emerged in recent years. Major challenges include violence, conflict with the law, substance abuse and declining employment. The key emergent issue, for adolescents and entire societies, is HIV/AIDS. With an HIV prevalence rate over 2 per cent, the Caribbean is in danger of suffering sub-Saharan-scale impacts. HIV is emerging as the leading cause of death in many countries. Both sexes are badly affected, and women account for 35 per cent of the cases in the region.

7. **Achievements and constraints**. The education for child development and participation programme contributed to the adoption of a Caribbean Plan of Action, now endorsed through legislation in some countries. This process drew on evaluations in four countries. A harmonization and integration of early childhood development (ECD) programme component and curriculum are beginning in all

countries, and are attracting the interest of such donor partners as the Inter-American Development Bank and the European Union. A community empowerment process for ECD in vulnerable communities has reached 50 per cent of the targeted areas, with special emphasis on education of parents. An early concern with sustainability prompted the formation, in July 2000, of a Caribbean association charged with supporting the development of national associations, which in turn coordinate national networking and government and NGO efforts in the area of education for child development and participation. In total, the subregional components are advancing very well, and the individual country elements are generally strong.

8. One goal of the health and community life promotion programme is to increase conflict resolution skills and promote communication on sensitive issues among adolescents and within communities. UNICEF supported training of over 1,400 teachers, parents and facilitators as a strategy to address such issues as racial stereotyping, adolescent sexuality and youth violence. The strong positive reactions by participants, including youth, have led seven countries to draft national policies and establish national committees to facilitate coordinated country-level implementation. This process is also being considered as a tool to support regional strategies to combat HIV/AIDS and reduce the use illegal drugs.

9. A second programme goal targets basic health services for at-risk groups and areas. Two additional hospitals were certified as "baby friendly" (which is significant in these generally small nations with high reliance on hospital deliveries), and over 65 per cent of maternity institution staff have been trained. A policy review is under way to ensure that HIV-positive mothers have support options. Immunization coverage is generally very good and was greatly increased in Suriname, a programme target area, where the training of village health promoters as extension workers helped raise vaccination levels from 70 per cent to 85 per cent, especially in the disadvantaged interior. Violence and reproductive health issues continue to be areas of high priority, for which gender mainstreaming has been promoted as a strategic management tool.

10. The child rights promotion programme objectives include institutional support for child rights and reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A number of countries have established a National Coalition on the Rights of the Child to oversee all child rights issues, and multisectoral coordination committees exist in eight countries. Partnerships are growing and include the intellectual resources of the University of the West Indies. This has enhanced capacity in reporting on the Convention and has improved programme coordination and greater acceptance of children's rights. The programme has facilitated the submission of eight initial or periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and four others are being produced. Thanks in part to this reporting process, certain issues are receiving priority attention, among them juvenile justice. Initial research in this area has been conducted in all countries, and a regional consensus has been developed on how to proceed. A pilot legal reform process is being implemented in the OECS countries in conjunction with, inter alia, the OECS Secretariat. Although in general revision of legislation to comply with the Convention is proceeding slowly, notable advances have been made in Trinidad and Tobago, where legislation has been introduced that addresses deficiencies identified by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and in Suriname, which is engaged in a similar effort.

11. The families and children programme component successfully advocated for a second chance for adolescents at risk of discontinuing their education. This led to formal policies in two countries to help teenage mothers return to school, and replication of these policies in others. Small gains were made in the prevention and treatment of child abuse; and three countries now observe April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, with major social communication efforts, among other activities. Anti-domestic violence efforts have been hampered, however, by certain societal norms.

12. Social investment, planning, monitoring and evaluation programme activities have created a heightened awareness of the importance of social indicators. The Ministerial Conferences on Children and Social Policy in the Americas provided opportunities for countries to review progress made towards the goals of the World Summit for Children. Social data monitoring systems are being promoted in partnership with OECS. Nonetheless, there are weaknesses in social data systems and in links between the monitoring of results and implementation of changes in national planning. As noted above, the advocacy efforts to increase national basic social service budgets have shown little success.

13. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR validated the programme relevance and structure, and no major changes are called for in the country programme as a whole, although some changes have been made. Effective advocacy for a "good start in life" and social mobilization contributed significantly to the success of the education for child development and participation programme. However, the transition to a multi-component programme with learning, health, nutrition and care has been slow. There is a need within nations to consolidate these efforts under one management mechanism.

14. Simultaneous programming for children in school, out of school and in informal learning environments will assure better coverage of the health and community life promotion programme. Further, it is felt that HIV/AIDS prevention messages will be more effective when students, teachers and parents are reached at the same time.

15. A cooperative dialogue among the Government, NGOs and partners helps the Convention reporting process. Linkages between official and NGO reports have been strengthened and there is now less conflict. However, there is still dissonance between the Convention and the views of the public in the Caribbean on such themes as physical punishment of children. In addition, some segments of the population are unaware or have vague notions of the Convention. Since stakeholder ownership contributes to success, the promotion of the rights of the child must be increased.

16. The objectives of the social investment, planning, monitoring and evaluation programme are too ambitious considering national capacity, and there is a need to revise interventions based on programme resources and national capacity.

17. **Country programme management plan (CPMP)**. As no major changes to the existing programme were proposed, a major review of the CPMP was not called for. Because the projects in education for child development and participation and in basic education have expanded, there is a need for a project officer in education, which will be funded by unsecured donor financing. As was projected at the start of the country programme, Suriname now receives enhanced technical support,

including the first full-time UNICEF staff member, who leads a UNICEF liaison office.

Major country programme evaluations

18. The three evaluations in this report were selected to analyse how multi-year, multisectoral efforts are translating rights concepts into on-the-ground programming. The first is a regional evaluation of rights programming implementation in three countries (Brazil, Costa Rica and Venezuela), where significant strides have been made. The second looks at the multisectoral effort to implement a child and adolescent code throughout Brazil. The third looks at the second phase of the eight-country Amazon programme.

UNICEF programming with a rights-based approach: the case of Brazil, Costa Rica and Venezuela

19. Throughout the 1990s, Governments and their partners in the region worked to define social policies according to standards and principles established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. By 1999, a body of experience existed, but there had been no systematic assessment or documentation. Brazil, Costa Rica and Venezuela were selected as initial case studies because the transition to a rights approach was perceived to be well under way. The objectives of the study were to: examine the legislative and social changes that had taken place in each of the three countries since the Convention was adopted as the framework for UNICEF cooperation; understand the processes through which the changes occurred, in particular the changes in public spending, institutional capacity-building, training and social mobilization, once legislative reform was accomplished; and assess the role that UNICEF had played in bringing about these changes.

20. An international consultant led the effort, assisted by three country-based national consultants. After a desk review, country visits focused on interviewing government officials, UNICEF staff and other key actors, in identifying effective rights-based programming in each country. A number of programmes were analysed to identify, where possible, themes common across societies and sectors.

21. Rights programming is often politically delicate. UNICEF and its partners must work at high political levels, while at the same time maintaining distance from the Government and other political actors to preserve the independence to propose policy interventions to all partners. Therefore, initial UNICEF strategies are often directed at engaging the highest levels of the political process and establishing relations with as many influential persons and institutions as possible.

22. While UNICEF has the moral stature to place important and sensitive issues on a national agenda, sustainable success depends on national "ownership", through the establishment of effective partnerships among a wide range of allies sharing the same values and concerns. This requires a broad mobilization of counterparts as well as mobilization of civil society. The more sensitive the issue, the wider the mobilization required.

23. While policy reform is often a starting point, rights interventions normally expand over time. It is common in many sectors to find that support is required in

legal reform, institutional development and capacity-building, monitoring of public expenditure, systems (coordinated multisectoral interventions) for rights guarantees, and mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of child rights. It almost always requires a focus of efforts at state, district and community levels. Rights programming therefore often coincides with decentralization efforts, which in many countries may be alternately innovative, conflict-ridden or poorly funded.

24. Child rights programming is more successful when there are numerous channels for civil society to exercise influence; when there is a well-developed institutional framework for delivering social services; when social organizations link communities to the state; and when constitutional instruments have a rights focus. The evaluation showed, in fact, that it was neither the Governments nor UNICEF, but civil society, that pioneered the use of the Convention as an advocacy tool.

25. The transition to a child rights approach can be hampered by: conservative economic and social policies characterized by paternalism and political patronage; the insufficient capacity of local-level bodies to assume the new responsibilities; the continued application of archaic law regarding minors; resistance to child rights concepts by executive, legislative and/or judicial officials; and the absence of valid, timely and relevant data and indicators on the fulfilment and violation of rights.

26. The structure of UNICEF country programmes is changing, mirroring the rights promotion strategies employed. Programme areas and projects have been reduced in number and have become more interactive, intersectoral and holistic in their approach to the child. On the other hand, the expansion in the number of partners resulting from decentralization and civil society participation places strains on programme management.

27. Based on the experience of the three countries, several priority areas of action are recommended for UNICEF in the coming years: reinforcing mobilization and advocacy efforts to ensure national commitments; reaffirming and mobilizing progressive social policies of equity and universality and advocating increased social expenditures; increasing popular knowledge of rights and reinforcing the organizations that help people demand their rights and denounce violations; expanding youth and adolescent rights education and participation; reinforcing the decentralization process; strengthening the institutions and methods used to monitor rights, especially by involving universities and developing better indicators; increasing international partnerships by more fully explaining a rights approach; and continuing to improve competence and management skills of UNICEF staff to adapt to the demands of rights programming.

Brazil's Statute of the Child and the Adolescent

28. The Brazilian Statute of the Child and the Adolescent (ECA), national legislation that translates the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into on-the-ground programmes, completed 10 years of implementation in June 2000. As part of a national effort to reorient the ECA, the National Commission (comprising the National Council of the Rights of the Child and the Adolescent, UNICEF, the National Forum for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, and the Department of the Child and the Adolescent of the Ministry of Justice) requested a more formal evaluation to analyse the implementation process, results achieved, main constraints and lessons learned. The evaluators were also asked to define goals

for the next five years. The evaluation was so comprehensive that the results are still being discussed and assimilated by the different participants. Therefore, only those areas on which consensus has been achieved are reported here.

29. Two out of ten institutions that submitted proposals were selected to conduct the evaluation, which involved six months of research in various regions nationwide. To help understand processes and identify the direct and unanticipated outcomes and consequences brought about by ECA implementation, the methodology combined a review of documentation with eight regional and state meetings and one national technical workshop attended by experts in various ECA issues. Data collected via questionnaires and focus groups were used extensively, and an internet site was created to poll the public.

30. Critical initial impetus for the ECA came from the mobilization of, inter alia, civil society, child defence associations and the media. A critical but necessary break from the past was the acceptance of an integral protection doctrine (instead of the comparatively limited and legalistic Minor's Code), which combines the formulation and management of child-oriented public policies with social, education and special protection measures.

31. In order to strengthen institutions, national, state and municipal Councils of Rights (policy formulation and management) and Guardianship Councils (social, education and protection measures) were established. The National Council, which includes civil society members, was essential in boosting the state and municipal councils, in part through national conferences (in 1994, 1997 and 1999) and mobilization events carried out nationwide. Another important development was the design of integrated protection plans for children and adolescents. By August 2000, all 26 states and the Federal District had councils. Among the 5,507 municipalities, 56 per cent had Councils of Rights and 31 per cent had Guardianship Councils; further, 54 per cent of the constituted Councils of Rights had established a Fund for the Child and the Adolescent, another legal mechanism for the implementation of the ECA.

32. In spite of this progress, there were many difficulties, including: a lack of commitment by public authorities and the consequent concentration of power at the level of sectoral secretariats (health, education and social security); the absence of rewards or praise for good work; the lack of technical competence for managing the Fund; and a lack of understanding among councillors of the municipal budget, and the resulting inability to participate. In fact, the proliferation of sectoral secretariats led to weak coordination among them, and between the secretariats, the Guardianship and Rights Councils, and the judiciary.

33. In spite of the difficulties, there is widespread evidence that councils play an important role. They have participated in the municipal budget allocation and implementation processes (aided by an analytic and advocacy methodology of public spending developed with the assistance of UNICEF); promoted the networking of public service providers; helped sensitize the judiciary to integrated rights and how to handle violations; and publicly denounced the poor utilization of resources targeted to children and adolescents.

34. In the area of juvenile penal reform, the majority of the states are now providing alternatives to incarceration: "provisional freedom deprivation" was established in 78 per cent of the states, "semi-freedom" and "assisted freedom" in 74

per cent, and community service in 52 per cent (these are national terms for varying mixes of incarceration and supervised alternatives). However, reform of the prisons themselves, despite some effort, shows little progress. The ECA is still seen by large segments of the public as a law with little institutional efficiency or judicial effectiveness.

35. Lessons learned show that there is consensus that Brazil needs to continue efforts to make the ECA work. One key element of agreement is the need to strengthen social participation using both institutional and unofficial channels to increase involvement and alliance-building. The media must be more involved, especially in increasing an understanding of the ECA. Another area under discussion is direct adolescent participation, which has not been a major priority. It is felt that the right to participation (in culture, sports, leisure, politics and education) needs to be elevated to a core strategy and goal.

36. The councils and other elements of ECA implementation need greater technical competence. Yet institutional capacity-building will not be sufficient in and of itself. The main element in raising interest in, and legitimacy of, the ECA is to increase the demand by civil society to see that the rights of all children are met. In part, this means ensuring that people understand that the Statute was not created solely to protect the rights of children and adolescents at risk or in especially difficult circumstances.

37. As a method to increase knowledge and acceptance of the ECA, civil society must join in monitoring rights in Brazil. It is important that attention be paid to accountability, advocacy and equity in policy formulation and service delivery. Second, civic involvement in allocation of public capital via the funds and, more generally, in advocacy for social spending, is an underutilized resource. Successful efforts have been made in creating a training packet to analyse where government funding needs to be expanded, with an emphasis on greater involvement in defining local priorities and ensuring that funds are allocated in line with those priorities.

38. As lessons from the evaluation of the ECA are still being examined, it is possible that significant additional adjustments in objectives and strategies will occur. Yet on the whole, it has been concluded that its fundamental conceptual and organizational bases are sound, and that an intensification of efforts, rather than a reorientation, is needed.

The Amazon Subregional Programme for Social Action

39. The Amazon Subregional Programme for Social Action was established in 1992 and renewed in 1997 by the Executive Board for a five-year period, with an allocation of $20 million. The programme seeks to improve the welfare of the Amazon region's poorest populations, with special focus on children, women and indigenous peoples. Covering eight countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela), the programme is incorporated in each country programme and has been coordinated and monitored by the regional office. While staying within the broad objectives of the programme, country offices may choose different interventions. There are, however, numerous elements found in several countries, as well as some exemplary cross-national programming.

40. The evaluation was a contribution to the mid-term review of phase II of the programme. National and international consultants worked from terms of reference developed jointly by the regional and country offices. The review sought to examine programme objectives and strategies aimed at reducing social disparities and gaps in basic human development, through integrated demonstration programmes, including basic social services (primary education, health, water and sanitation), and to assess the institutional capacity-building for local management and decision-making, as well as community participation. The review sought to identify the added value of UNICEF involvement and to project how additional national and bilateral/multilateral inputs could take successful interventions to scale. Following a desk review, the consultants interviewed UNICEF staff, counterparts and beneficiaries. The findings were reviewed by a UNICEF team in a technical meeting held in Belem, Brazil, in October 2000.

41. Phase I targeted the immediate needs of sectoral activities that lacked institutional and/or financial sustainability. It was a trial and error period in a difficult programming environment. For example, services delivered by boat (e.g., in Ecuador's health care system) faced maritime problems in addition to mobilization, training and other issues. Efforts included baseline research and local alliance-building.

42. In many ways, phase I created a programming infrastructure and knowledge base for phase II, which moved towards greater horizontal and integrated approaches. Efforts went beyond direct delivery of services towards capacity-building of local government to improve service access and quality. UNICEF now provides technical assistance to municipal governments to prioritize social agendas and budgets, and to plan for better implementation. The most effective UNICEF interventions are in technical assistance for programme design, and in conceptualization, especially in applying ideas from regional and global experience.

43. UNICEF played an important role in breaking down sectoral walls and in overcoming distrust of decentralization processes at the central level. UNICEF added value as a neutral actor bringing different agencies together to further common agendas.

44. Partnership arrangements are still evolving. Integration requires multisectoral teams, which in districts often include the Ministries of Education, Agriculture and Social Affairs, the regional health service and local NGOs. Civil society groups are also increasingly involved, for example, the Catholic Church in Venezuela.

45. In the area of participation, efforts are concentrated in mobilizing communities to demand their rights and in increasing the formal involvement of beneficiaries. Women, in particular, have benefited in Bolivia and Ecuador, where they are increasingly active in local politics. In general, women, youth, the indigenous and other traditionally marginalized groups are not only voicing their opinions, but are also being heard. Participation is not directly linked to higher funding levels, however. In fact, programmes with fewer resources were found to generate a higher level of community ownership.

46. The growing involvement and more active participation of local institutions has resulted in a sense of project ownership on the part of communities, helping to create a sense of identity and common effort. Nonetheless, there is room for improvement. Whereas communities participate in community intersectoral planning

workshops, they are often excluded from district initiatives, and from the evaluation and monitoring processes. As a result, local ownership has not been achieved in several countries.

47. In the Amazon basin, large-scale disparities that disadvantage indigenous groups and others continue. Reducing these disparities requires support and action beyond the level of the programme. UNICEF and its partners must rededicate themselves at the country level to bring to light rights abuses and to advocate for public policies that uphold and enforce rights.

48. Lessons learned showed that coordination with local, regional and national planning agencies is critical. Given the number of countries, sectors and levels involved, the planning agencies ensure that the programme operates within national policies and that the tensions that exist between central and local governments are resolved.

49. The multinational potential of the programme has not been vigorously pursued and should have a more central role in coming years. Traditional diseases such as malaria, and new threats like HIV/AIDS, are best attacked in their risk zones, regardless of political boundaries. Yet this will require national and subnational cooperation across borders that is hard to arrange. Other issues of potential multinational cooperation are the cultural adaptation of services to promote user-friendliness, environmental awareness (e.g., in school curricula) and women's rights.

50. UNICEF can play a key role in accelerating the identification and cross-border dissemination of best practices. High priority will be given to areas where UNICEF has a strong comparative advantage — maternal mortality programming, social data and rights monitoring information systems, and bilingual and intercultural education.

51. While programme refinements will continue, it is time to work towards increasing the scale of the programme. A subregional component is needed to facilitate the best practices exchange and to forge regional alliances and solicit international support.

Conclusion

52. The MTR of the multi-country programme of the Eastern Caribbean is significant for two main reasons. First is the impact of the programme itself: in areas like health and community life promotion, it is piloting innovative approaches to some of the most sensitive issues in Caribbean societies, and doing so in a way that involves youth, adults and teachers. This programme, and many others, such as early childhood policy reforms, are creating entirely new structures, approaches and rights concepts in countries that, on the whole, have already made significant advances in the area of rights.

53. The programme is important in a broader way as well, because it is one of the few in UNICEF that cover several nations from a central location, and therefore has much less consistent contact with programme countries than those with a full UNICEF office. In effect, it is providing a model for countries entering the transition process in such areas as skills needed in the UNICEF offices; the use of regional bodies to maximize the limited UNICEF presence; and the types of programming that make sense in wealthier societies. As the country programme

moves into years 4 and 5, UNICEF should be monitoring both the impacts in programme countries and the processes by which UNICEF and partners are realizing success.

54. The evaluations taken as a whole are also important. They are process evaluations more than impact evaluations: that is, they analyse how programmes need to evolve within a rights framework, more than they attempt to discern specific impacts. Despite the differences in programme scale and national settings examined, similar themes are emerging. Among the consistent lessons are the increased need for strong public-civil society partnerships, and the need to consider comprehensive approaches, including constitutional/policy reform to public sector capacity-building and financing, decentralization and civil society involvement, and the need for good monitoring and evaluation to promote accountability. This comprehensiveness necessarily stresses programme management, and places a premium on effective alliance-building with national and international partners, and on improving the capacity of subnational governments and communities. UNICEF offices tend to change as programmes evolve: towards intersectoral teams that promote holistic planning, and towards fewer but thematically more comprehensive programmes. These and the many more points found in the evaluations are useful guidance for country offices embarking on similar efforts.

55. Yet the evaluations were not process evaluations only. Specific lessons have emerged on rights programming innovations, such as the Rights and Guardianship Councils in Brazil, and on planning to meet indigenous community needs. Not only are these lessons important to the programmes that sponsored the evaluations, they are also relevant to many other countries that have similar programmatic interests.

56. The evaluations provide important lessons, which are currently or will be widely circulated. The lessons learned/best practices identification and dissemination process is being strengthened in the region. In particular, new staff have been added in the regional office in part to address this issue, and regional and country-level staff have agreed to make it a priority. The Latin America and Caribbean region expects to be able to report in coming years on a greatly expanded and more effective process of identification and dissemination of lessons learned.